

May 1996

NEXT MEETINGS:

BOARD MEETING

7:00 pm

Tuesday, June 4, '96

SUPPORT MEETING

7:30 pm

Tuesday, May 21, '96

10112 - 124 St

Lower Level

Guest speaker, Louise Mackay, will present a request for participants in her doctoral thesis study. This study is designed to obtain knowledge on gay/lesbian suicide/ suicide ideation which will enable professionals - psychiatrists, doctors, psychologists, teachers, public health nurses, etc - to successfully assist these suicidal young people in their struggle with these self-destructive feelings.

Please see page 5 for further details.

For further info please phone

Cindy at [redacted] Lynne at [redacted]
or Ellen at [redacted]



PFLAG EDMONTON

Interim Executive

All paid-up members were invited to attend an April 9/96 meeting to form an interim executive which will continue executive responsibilities until the fall of '96. The following executive was formed:

- Chairperson - Cindy
- Recording Secretary - Catherine & Bryson
- Treasurer - Cindy

- Membership - Catherine & Bryson
- Newsletter - Ellen
- Phonelines - Lynne & Jarrett, assisted by Blanche, Terry, Louise, Cindy & Ellen
- Special Functions/Fundraising - Terry & Kate
- Education, Outreach (e.g. workshops), Conferences - Ellen, Gisela, Kate
- Videos - Ernie
- Phone volunteers - Gisela, Catherine
- Library - Wayne & Graham
- Greeters at support meetings - three members per meeting on a rotating basis - Bryson & Catherine.

It is hoped that with more members involved that the quality and effectiveness of our support meetings will improve and that the workload in other areas will be more evenly distributed.

THANK YOU! - Imperial Court of the Wild Rose

PFLAG Edmonton received the following, very welcome, letter from the Imperial Sovereign Court of the Wild Rose:

THE COURT & PFLAG

Every year there is a newly elected Emperor and Empress of the Imperial Court of the wild Rose



(ISCWR). It is their main function, these honorary ambassadors to the City of Edmonton, to raise funds for charities that are the choice of this couple.

For the year 1995-1996 the Emperor (Mr. Vera) and Empress ("Toots" for short) have decided upon two: The Gay & Lesbian Community Centre (GLCC) and Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG).

The empress (out of drag) is also a gay parent of two and grandparent of three. In order to maintain good family values the situation has to be a very gay friendly consciousness. The choosing of these charities is in the belief that homophobia can be controlled but it has to begin within one's home life. Philosophies of parents are consistently learned or passed on to the next generation. This is where the schooling has to begin - within the home. This cannot be achieved without fundings for resource materials, speakers, counselling services or just basic phonelines.

Throughout the year of their reign, all monies collected are stored in a treasury. These monies (after expenses) are then divided equally between the chosen charities and presented to them at the next Coronation Ball or "Step Down", this year's being held at the Chateau Louis Conference Centre on Sunday, September 1, 1996.

PFLAG wishes to thank "Toots" and "Mr. Vera" for naming us as one of the beneficiaries of their fundraising efforts for 1995/96. Note to PFLAG members - Remember to support their efforts!

PFLAG SUPPORT

ALBERTA SUMMIT '96

The annual conference of les/bi/gay/trans people and their supporters took place April 26 - 28, '96 at Red Deer College.

Guest speaker Svend Robinson accurately predicted the two to one vote in favor of passing Bill C-33 which now includes sexual orientation, along with gender, race, age, ethnic origin, religion, and color as minorities legally protected from discrimination. (See PFLAG Advocacy for further details)

Svend Robinson also strongly praised PFLAG groups for their contributions to and support of their les/bi/gay/trans children. He then pointed out PFLAG members in the audience including Jenny and Terry from Edmonton and Deb and her husband from Calgary. The audience gave them an enthusiastic round of welcoming applause.

The above named PFLAGers conducted a **marvellous** workshop the following day at the summit. This workshop was both the best attended and highest evaluated workshop at the summit! Jenny began by outlining the history of PFLAG, particularly in Alberta. Each speaker told their personal story and then the floor was opened for questions. The flood of questions which ensued necessitated the workshop running overtime.

At the dance that night PFLAG members received free drinks at their table from les/bi/gay/trans groups such as the U of A's OUTreach. At breakfast the following morning a number of young people came up to Jenny and

Edmonton

Terry to thank them for coming and giving them so much support.

PFLAG Edmonton would like to thank Jenny and Terry for the wonderful job they have done in representing our group at the summit.

For Jenny and Terry this experience was most moving, joyful and rewarding. They strongly recommend that PFLAG send more parents to Summit '97!

While Jenny and Terry were presenting their workshop, Graham was manning the PFLAG display table which he so capably organized and attractively designed. Conference participants picked up PFLAG materials including business cards, newsletters, the brochures "Coming out to parents", "Supporting our gay loved ones", and "Answers to your questions about sexual orientation & homosexuality", and PFLAG Speakers Bureau pamphlets.

Both Lethbridge and Red Deer gay community members at the Alberta Summit '96 expressed a desire to get a PFLAG group formed in their respective communities. In fact, Lethbridge went so far as to offer to pay the expenses of some PFLAG Edmonton members to travel to their community and meet with them. From this, the idea has come up that perhaps some PFLAG members plan a "teaching trip" holiday this year to meet with gays and parents to offer suggestions, resources and guidance concerning the organization of new PFLAG groups....A positive benefit from this would be to establish a network of PFLAG groups in the province which would strengthen all communities. PFLAG members are asked to give serious consideration to this suggestion.

Graham

PFLAG POSTERS

Over 200 of our 11" x 16" posters have now been distributed to schools, libraries, doctor's offices, child welfare offices, etc. We don't get a lot of feedback but what we do get is encouraging, for example the following (true) story:

At a local high school in Greater Edmonton a PFLAG poster was put up in the school library. It was soon taken down by a young male student. Our "intrepid" educator then put up another poster. Eleven times this young man took the poster down and twelve times our educator put up a new poster. The twelfth poster did not come down. Instead, the young man "came out" to a few of his friends, revealing to them his homosexual orientation. These friends stood by him and have been very supportive.

PFLAG Edmonton is delighted and hopes that this young man and other gay youth who hate their sexual orientation will be encouraged to come out of the closet and accept themselves for the wonderful people they are.

P.S. This persistent educator frequently speaks to parent groups throughout northern Alberta on educational and parenting topics. He has promised to take a supply of our posters with him, distributing them and making parents aware of PFLAG support groups wherever he goes. We hope he will also tell them this heartwarming story of how our troubled lesbian and gay youth can be helped - just by the presence of a poster which shows that there are many other gay and lesbian youth "out there", plus adults who support them.

PFLAG EDUCATION

A valuable new source of information has come to us from the internet via Graham. This is GLSTN: THE GAY, LESBIAN, AND STRAIGHT TEACHERS NETWORK, a national federation of local groups working to address issues of homophobia and heterosexism in K-12 public, private and parochial schools.

Tel. [REDACTED]

E-mail: glstn@lglstn.org

Web:
<http://www.glstn.org/freedom/>

What is GLSTN'S mission?

GLSTN'S goal is to create a school environment in which every member of the school community is valued and respected, regardless of sexual orientation.

We believe that such an atmosphere engenders a positive sense of self, which is the basis of educational achievement and personal growth. Since homophobia and heterosexism undermine a healthy school climate, we work to educate teachers, students and the public at large about the damaging effects these forces have on youth and adults alike. We recognize that forces such as racism and sexism have similar adverse impacts on communities, and we support schools in seeking to redress all such inequities.

GLSTN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes in creating a more vibrant and diverse community. We welcome as members any individual, regardless of sexual orientation or occupation, who is

Edmonton

committed to seeing this philosophy realized in K-12 schools.

What does GLSTN do?

To fulfill our mission GLSTN is committed to the following activities:

- 1) addressing homophobia and heterosexism in schools by facilitating communication among educators of all sexual orientations.
- 2) promoting dialogue with and among schools on the needs of gay, lesbian and bisexual youth and their families.
- 3) developing and distributing trainings, curricula and other materials in printed form and online which provide schools with strategies to guarantee equality for their students, to create a safe environment, to provide support and training for their faculty, and to value diversity with regard to sexual identity.
- 4) helping schools understand how communities which value diversity are healthier ones for all students, regardless of sexual orientation and that students are then freer to realize their human potential in such an environment.
- 5) educating the general public on the necessity for addressing sexual identity in the educational system as a means of creating better schools.
- 6) creating support for gay, lesbian and bisexual students and teachers currently in schools.
- 7) advocating change in the society at large with regard to homophobia and heterosexism, working to influence local, state and national leaders.

What has GLSTN accomplished?

GLSTN's work has been highly successful. GLSTN developed the



"Gay-Straight Alliance" student support program, and helped establish such groups in schools in more than a dozen states. GLSTN was instrumental in the fight that made Massachusetts the first state to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation against public schools students in December, 1993. In 1994 GLSTN was chosen to develop the faculty training component of the Department of Education's "Safe Schools for Gay and Lesbian Youth" program, the first state-wide effort to provide comprehensive training to school staffs on the needs of gay and lesbian youth. GLSTN helped establish Gay and Lesbian History Month, persuading Massachusetts Governor William Weld and Connecticut Governor Lowell Weicker to issue proclamations on behalf of this inaugural event in October, 1994 and host the nation's largest conference on the subject as well. In local chapters across the nation, GLSTN members have won partner benefits for members, created more inclusive curriculum, delivered hundreds of trainings for school staffs, and carried out a myriad of activities to make our schools better places for all to work and learn. More than 20 local chapters have been founded across the country during the past twelve months.

Who should join GLSTN?

Anyone who cares about homophobia in schools! GLSTN believes that we must all come together - gay or straight, teacher or student, community member or school employee - in a true coalition dedicated to making our schools places where students learn self-respect instead of self-hatred.

"Whether you are a gay or straight teacher, you should support GLSTN if you care about your

students. GLSTN helped me to understand, as a "straight ally", why I needed to care about this issue and to take action."

--Tom Stege, Science Teacher and Academic Dean, Austin, Texas.

"As a new teacher, GLSTN has been invaluable. GLSTN gave me the opportunity to work with other committed educators who face many of the same issues I face in my school. The support I have received has reaffirmed my belief in the strength of numbers and the importance of taking action."

--Torey Wilson, History Teacher, Oak Park, Illinois

New GLSTN Chapter

On March 5, '96 a new GLSTN chapter was formed in Houston, Texas. In a presentation given by Kevin Jennings, National Executive Director (USA), he stated that, "Every 5 hours and 48 minutes a gay youth dies. Every time we teach, somebody dies."

GLSTN strives to assure that every member of every school community is valued and respected, regardless of sexual orientation. Statistics show that 28 percent of all gay youth drop out of school - three times the national average.

(The above information is excerpted from an article in the Houston PFLAG Flyer, April, '96)

PFLAG Humor

The following is a true story from *The Second Stone*, a national news journal for gay and lesbian Christians, their families, friends and relatives. It comes to us courtesy of PFLAG Houston who

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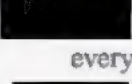
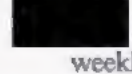
reprinted it from the PFLAG Phoenix newsletter.

An airline worker, whose last name is Gay, was using his free flight program recently. He got on the plane and found the free seat assigned to him occupied by a paying passenger. Mr. Gay took a seat nearby. Another of his company's flights waiting at the airport ran into mechanical problems. Airline officials, equipped with a list of freebie ticker-holders, began asking non-paying passengers to give up their seats to make way for paying passengers from the other plane. Going to the seat assigned to the airline employee, a ticket agent asked, "Are you gay?" Somewhat taken aback, the passenger nodded yes, at which the agent said, "Then you'll have to get off." Mr. Gay overheard the conversation and decided to clear up the confusion. "You've got the wrong man. I'm Gay." A third passenger, having heard the exchange, angrily said, "Hell, I'm gay too. They can't kick us all off!" The mass confusion was soon cleared up and no one had to give up his seat because of sexual orientation!

EVENTS CALENDAR

OUT & OUT EVENTS

(Out & Out is an outdoor recreation group for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and their friends)

-  Mark: Cycling
-  Jeff: Frontrunners, every Sunday
-  Lois: Dogwalking, weekly

• [REDACTED] Mitchell:

Rollerblading, every second Monday starting May 6

- Ron: Beech volleyball, evenings

- May 18, Womospace monthly dance at Bonnie Doon Hall, 9240-93 St, 8:00pm to 1:00am, phone [REDACTED] Lesbian life line
- May 24, Pizza and Pub Nite at Edmonton's premiere micro-brewery, Alleycat, 9929-60 Ave. This benefit starts at 6:30 pm. Prices slightly above wholesale.
- May 26, *Rocking the Cause*, a fundraiser for Living Positive at Rebar, 10551-82 Ave. Advance tickets \$6, Door \$8.
- June 14 - 22, Pride Week, Volunteers needed, phone Todd at [REDACTED] and leave a message.
- June 21, GLCC Fundraiser at the Roost, 10345-104 St. A 12 hour extravaganza. Pick up your pledge sheets at the Roost. Lots of fun and prizes!
- 7:15 Sunday Service, Metropolitan Community Church, 10086-McDonald Drive. A social time follows the service. Ph. 429-3231
- 7:00 Sunday Service, Lambda Church, 11148-84 Ave. For info: 988-3913
- 6:00 - 7:00, Thursdays, Radio CJSR, 88.5 FM, "Celebrate our Lifestyle"

- 5:00 - 5:30, Fridays, Radio CJSR, "Queer discussions and interviews."

- 7:30 - 10:00, Saturdays, Pink Triangle Youth Group, 16 to 21 years, activities and socials. Ph. [REDACTED] V.B. 10

- A Support Group for battered partners in lesbian relationships is being formed in conjunction with the WYCA. For info: [REDACTED]

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Gay Pride week is being held the week of June 16 - 22/96. Events will include:

- Lesbian and gay movies all week at the Princess Theatre. PFLAG volunteers who would be willing to speak to the audience after the movie each night are being requested to inform Cindy or Lynne.
- Pride picnic, June 22, needs numerous PFLAG volunteers. Please phone Lynn or Cindy to offer your help.

GUEST SPEAKER

May 21, '95

My name is Louise MacKay and I am a Ph. D. student in Counselling Psychology at the University of Alberta. After

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just having completed my first year of studies, I am presently working on my Ph.D. dissertation. For my master's thesis, I studied therapists' experiences of working with suicidal clients. Although I have a continued interest in studying suicide, I am even more interested in studying suicide prevention, specifically in gay and lesbian adolescents.

Indeed suicidal ideations, suicide attempts, and completed suicides are an all too frequent occurrence in adolescents. However, these suicidal behaviors are even more prevalent in the gay and lesbian adolescent population. As a result of this prevalence, my Ph.D. dissertation will be studying the experiences of gay and lesbian adolescents growing up in their families. I will be exploring both the positive and negative experiences that the adolescents have encountered in their homes. I will also be investigating the parent's/parents' experiences of raising a gay or lesbian adolescent.

From studying the experiences of both the gay and lesbian adolescents and their parent(s), important knowledge will be gained as we will learn about what creates both the positive and negative experience for the adolescent and the family



dynamics involved in this process. By acquiring this knowledge, we can begin to educate mental health professionals, school educators, and family members on how to support gay and lesbian adolescents during this period of development so they can develop a strong, healthy sense of self. This research is of importance as adolescents who have a stronger sense of self, and a strong support network may be less likely to engage in suicidal behaviors.

This research will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Barbara Paulson, chartered psychologist and professor in Counselling Psychology at the University of Alberta. Dr. Paulson currently teaches and supervises graduate students and as well she is involved in research in the areas of counselling and suicide.

This study will be qualitative in nature in that approximately eight gay and lesbian adults and their respective parent or parents will be interviewed separately about their experiences. The eight gay and lesbian adults will retrospectively recount their experiences of growing up in their families as a gay or lesbian adolescent. Additionally, each respective parent/parents will share their experiences of raising a gay

or lesbian adolescent. Each interview will be approximately one hour in length and the information shared during the interviews will be kept completely confidential and anonymous.

Due to the importance and relevance of this research study, I hope that anyone who is interested in being a participant in this study would leave their name and telephone number at this number, [REDACTED]. As well, I am looking forward to attending your PFLAG meeting on May 21, '96. At that time, I will present my research study in more detail and I will answer any questions that you may have concerning the study or any questions that you may have on being a participant (gay or lesbian adult and their respective parent/parents) in the study. Look forward to meeting with you,

Sincerely,

Louise MacKay

PFLAG EDUCATION

Late News Flash!

Three PFLAG Edmonton members were on their separate ways to a meeting at Edmonton Public Schools headquarters where a surprise awaited them. Bonnie Fox from ITV News was waiting to interview two parents of lesbian and gay children for the six o'clock news - at which

Edmonton

the results of the House of Commons vote on including sexual orientation in the Canadian Human Rights Act was to be announced.

Gisela arrived first, saw the ITV news van and jokingly said to herself, "Ah, they are here for us." Within minutes Bonnie Fox was asking Gisela if she was willing to be interviewed as the parent of a gay son. Taken totally by surprise Gisela courageously answered "yes" and gave an excellent 5min interview. Lynne, who was next to arrive, followed suit giving her interview as the parent of a lesbian daughter. Ellen, also the parent of a gay son, arrived last and walked with Gisela and Lynne into our meeting with the TV camera still rolling.

The meeting, which was with the Edmonton Public Schools co-ordinator of counsellors and also the co-ordinator of Career and Life Management Teachers, laid the groundwork for raising awareness of issues for lesbian and gay EPS students. PFLAG support posters, appropriate library materials, a survey for evaluating safety/lack of safety for homosexual students in schools, workshops for educators, designated school support person(s), and forming gay positive student school groups were discussed. The reception by these two co-ordinators was exceptionally warm and encouraging.

Ellen

P.S. Watch for further developments as they happen!

It's a Gay Life!

May 1996

A SURVIVOR'S STORY:

Remember, Homophobia is child abuse too

(from CCSD - vis-a-vis, Vol. 13,
No. 2, p 9)

A young woman leaves her home in Halifax. In a Vancouver shelter a 14-year-old girl from Kamloops sits scared, nervous and alone. In a Toronto young offender centre a 15-year-old boy awaits trial. A Calgary teen lines up at the food bank hoping to get a little extra to help carry him through the month.

These young people are all products of one of Canada's leading social diseases - homophobia. They left their homes in search of a safe place, a haven from the never-ending violence they face because of who they are. Lesbian, gay and bisexual young people suffer every day at the hands of ignorance, fear and a society that is taught to hate those who are different.

As a young person working with other young people, I have experienced these horrific conditions called living. A 14-year-old boy gets enough courage to tell his parents he is gay - people who are supposed to respect and love him unconditionally. His father threatens violence if the boy ever talks about it again. His mother calls him names. In trying to identify with who he is, the boy

pierces his ear, dyes his hair and changes his style of clothing. His



father confronts him and assaults him physically. His mother supports the abuse with slurs. This is all her faggot son deserves she yells at him while he lies on the floor in tears.

Unfortunately, the story does not end here. His parents kick him out, and the boy joins thousands of street kids in Canada - of whom an estimated 50% have sexual orientation issues. But the boy has learned just how dangerous it is to tell people who he is. So he lives in silence. Alone on the street there are few avenues he can take. He has lost his school year and his job, and is now sleeping in a shelter.

He tries to move back home, but dinner is still served with a side order of abuse. He starts experimenting with drugs and alcohol to try to get the support he is not getting at home.

Stories like this are common. Adults have not paid attention to these young people. They have not asked why young people are living in the streets in horrible conditions, so young people have started to band together to ask why. There are many different support groups in the country that now work with the philosophy of youth helping youth - young people who have been there helping those who are there now. We have come together because adults have let us down in the past. We are connecting so that issues such as family violence to gay, lesbian and bisexual youth can be properly addressed, so that the unique issues facing lesbian, gay and bisexual youth, such as isolation, peer alienation and systemic homophobia, are exposed. We need to educate teachers, counsellors, health care workers and, most importantly, our families. Parents need to remember that homophobia is child abuse too.

by Peter Hodgson

Peter Hodgson is Director of Alberta Youth In Care and Custody Network. He can be reached at:

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...more than 90% of gay and lesbian youths suffered verbal and physical assault because of their sexual orientation.⁷

How Alberta's Human Rights Act Protects Individuals

The following is an excerpt from a letter written by Deb Bridge, B.A., M.A. in reply to an editorial in the Calgary Sun Feb 25, '96 by Peter Stockland:

"Four years ago, when our son was 13 and told his then best friend in grade 8, 'I'm gay', we found out just how well Alberta's Human Rights Act protects individuals. Within a very short time, our son had been so badly discriminated against--so victimized, harassed, threatened, by his peers, by his teachers, by the school administration (and we had been the recipients of anonymous phone calls to our home, threatening death)--we thought surely the Human Rights Act must afford some protection. After contacting numerous lawyers, and the Human Rights Commission, we learned there was NOTHING we could do to stop the discrimination, because, 'homosexuals are not included in Alberta's Human Rights



legislation". So in the absence of any commitment on the school administration's part that would guarantee our son could pursue his education in safety and without any legislation to protect his RIGHTS, we removed him from the school. Our experience is NOT unique--this kind of discrimination happens all the time, and I'd be happy to sit down with you and document those cases I am personally aware of. And our son was/is lucky--he has supportive, loving parents who didn't, as many unaccepting parents do, kick him out; he wasn't beaten; he wasn't killed. Today he is a strapping 17-year-old who does kneebends with 100-plus-pound weights on his shoulders--he's a student at the National Ballet School in Toronto (attending on full academic scholarship, because his heterosexual parents aren't "well-off" and neither is he), accepted by one of the world's best professional dance training facilities after only a year and a

It's a Gay Life!

half of dance background. He is also an accomplished writer, potter, painter and actor--not bad for a "dirty faggot" whose classmates used to put duct tape over the seats of their gym clothes in physical education and chant "Fag! Fag! Fag!" whenever they saw him in the halls...

...tell me why this "tiny, well-off minority" that exercises such "enormous influence in media and political circles" DOESN'T deserve equal rights and protection under the law. Don't our children--disabled, of colour, gay--have a right to attend schools that are safe and free of discrimination? Don't ALL people have a right to pursue education, employment, and housing free of discrimination? If Alberta's legislation TRULY protected Mr. Vriend's rights, he wouldn't be unemployed and our son wouldn't still be haunted by memories of his "friends" and the educational system turning against him."

**False
Evidence
Appearing
Real**